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Bylines Build Business: How to Get Published

By Steven A. Meyerowitz

Lawyers who write for magazines and newspapers on legal issues are taking one of the most professional, productive and cost-effective steps they can to attract new clients and cement existing client relationships.

Even lawyers who generally want to avoid marketing and who certainly want to avoid advertising can write. An article by a lawyer is not just puffery. It provides substantive information that carries with it the implicit endorsement of the editor and the publication that the lawyer/author is an expert in a particular area of law.

The hard part about writing to attract new business is deciding to do it. Once a lawyer makes that decision, there are 10 steps to take to follow it through to fruition.

1. Create a Plan.

Now is an appropriate time for lawyers who have not marketed their services in the past to develop a marketing program. For instance, a lawyer can set a goal of writing four or six articles in 1994. Individuals or lawyers in the same practice group who publish frequently are able to get their names before potential clients and to remind existing clients of their presence on a regular basis, which is key. It simply is not worth the effort to publish an article now and then.

2. Choose a Subject.

It is easier, more practical and more valuable to write about what you know. A securities lawyer should write about

securities law, but the subjects can reflect the breadth of a lawyer's knowledge. Thus, a banking lawyer may be able to discuss environmental issues as they affect banks, perhaps using that article as a base from which to write about other environmental matters.

3. Focus the Topic.

There is an unlimited number of topics to write about. To develop a particular concept for an article, lawyers should review briefs filed and decisions they have obtained, compare decisions from local judges to those in other jurisdictions, examine subjects researched by associates, and read law review or law journal articles that discuss subjects of interest to particular trade publications.

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Another method is to explore a question raised by a sophisticated senior level client. It is not foolish to assume that other senior level executives at other companies in the same industry might have the same question; the subject matter of the question can form the basis for an article.

The focus for a particular article should be narrow. For example, a lawyer should not attempt to cover the complete environmental liability scheme that has arisen over the past decade. Instead, a bankruptcy lawyer could explain how environmental cleanup claims are treated in bankruptcy; a tax lawyer could analyze the deductibility of cleanup expenses; a corporate lawyer could examine the effectiveness of environmental indemnities; and an insurance lawyer could write about recent developments regarding the pollution exclusion clause contained in comprehensive general liability policies.

Narrowly focused articles allow the lawyer/author to cover the material in a reasonable length and to provide specific information. They also permit follow up articles on related issues; having many bylined articles is better than having one.

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4. Target Appropriate Publications.

While an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* or an article in the Business Section of the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* can provide tremendous exposure, the likelihood of being published in either of those places is quite small. The good news, however, is that for lawyers who have client development as a goal, being published in the *Journal* or *Times* is not necessary to get the job done.

Lawyers who know the audience they want to reach can find a publication intended for those people. CFOs, in-house counsel, the wealthy and other groups have publications tailored to their interests. As a consequence, a lawyer may find a dozen different places to publish. Many of these magazines and newspapers are sold at newsstands; others are listed in directories that are available in most libraries. A lawyer also can ask a client for the names of the trade journals the client and others in the industry regularly read.

5. Check First.

Before beginning to write, a lawyer should review back copies of the tar-